"THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT OF DIFFERENTLY ABLED (DIVYANGJAN) CITIZENS: A STUDY WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO LATUR DISTRICT"

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INTRODUCTION:

Creative things can be done in unusual situations. Divyangjan is one of the unusual populations that can be utilized as a great asset in the process of development of the nation. Divyangjan forms 2.21% of the population in India as per 2011 census, but this population was ignored by the will of the political arena of the nation. Yes, political systems have proposed many schemes to bring them into the mainstream, but no one was interested to see the outcomes. No one was ready to analyze the results of proposed schemes. We have to consider this population in the path of the third largest economy in the world. They too can contribute in the process of empowerment. In this regard we need to accept the reality of this population and their strengths which can be utilized for the overall development nation.

The Constitution of India ensures equality, freedom, justice and dignity of all individuals including persons with disabilities and mandates an inclusive society for all. Accordingly, the policy paradigm of Governance has always been proactive in addressing the needs of people in disadvantaged situations and providing them equal opportunities in every sphere of development. Disability is one of such situations and requires special attention at policy, implementation and monitoring levels. Statistics on disability, therefore, assumes special importance and provides much needed evidence on various facets of disability for a coherent policy and action.

The availability of valid and reliable data is critical in order to develop and evaluate policies and programs being implemented by Governments at various stages. The data on disability is extremely important for ensuring the upliftment of persons with disabilities and also to protect them against discrimination on the grounds of disability. However, measuring disability is a complex phenomenon as the definitions of disability vary at international and national level due to the various approaches.

The UN Secretary General on the occasion of a recent 'International Day for Persons with Disabilities' reaffirmed the commitment of the United Nations to work with people with disabilities to build a sustainable, inclusive and transformative future in which everyone, including women, men, girls and boys with disabilities, can realize their potential. Working towards an inclusive and barrier free society for Persons with disabilities is in consonance with the motto of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, i.e., "No one is left behind". Further, in 2020, the UN's theme for observing International Day for Persons with Disability was "Building Back Better: toward a disability inclusive, accessible and sustainable post COVID-19 World" as Persons with disabilities everyday face discrimination and barriers that restrict them from participating in society on an equal basis with others. This marathon task can only be

secured through evidence-based planning, proper implementation and monitoring for which the need of comprehensive reliable disability statistics cannot be overemphasized.

The present report of the NSO, Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoSPI) on disability is expected to provide significant data inputs in this endeavor at national level. This report on Disability is special as it provides an extensive scenario of the situation of persons with disabilities in India at national and sub-national level as well as information on recent global initiatives to bridge data gaps on Disability Statistics. The Report also highlights some of the main schemes and programmes launched by the Central Government that help in establishing an inclusive and enabling society for persons with disabilities.

DEFINITIONS ON DISABILITIES:

According to the **Oxford Dictionary**, a disability could be described as an impairment which can be Intellectual, limitations, cognitive, improvement, sensory, exercise or the mixture of all these. Incapacity impacts a person's activities and may happen at birth. Sometimes, it could happen in adulthood.

The Preamble to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) - 2006, adopted by the **United Nations**, describes disability by stating that: "Disability results from the interaction between persons with impairments and attitudinal and environmental barriers that hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others."

The **World Health Organization** (WHO) defines 'Disability' as "an umbrella term, covering impairments, activity limitations, and participation restrictions. Impairment is a problem in body function or structure; an activity limitation is a difficulty encountered by an individual in executing a task or action; while a participation restriction is a problem experienced by an individual in involvement in life situations. Thus disability is a complex phenomenon, reflecting an interaction between features of a person's body and features of the society in which he or she lives."

According to the **Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016**,"Person with disability" means a person with long term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairment which, in interaction with barriers, hinders his full and effective participation in society equally with others, and "Person with benchmark disability" means a person with not less than forty percent. Specified disability where has not been defined in measurable terms and includes a person with disability where specified disability has been defined in measurable terms, as certified by the certifying authority.

DISABILITY IN INDIA

As per the Census 2011, the differently abled population in India is 26.8 million. In percentage terms, this stands at 2.21 %. There has been a marginal increase in the differently-abled population in India, with the figure rising from 21.9 million in 2001 to 26.8 million over the period of 10 years.

As per the Census 2011, there are 14.9 million men with disabilities as compared to 11.9 million women in the country. The total number of differently-abled people is over 18.0 million in the rural areas and just 8.1 million enumerated in the urban settings. The percentage of men with disabilities is 2.41 per cent as against 2.01 in women. Social groups' wise analysis shows 2.45 per cent of the total disabled population belongs to the Scheduled Castes (SC), 2.05 per cent to the Scheduled Tribes (ST) and 2.18 per cent to people other than SC/ST."

Constitutional Provisions on Disability in India: The Constitution of India provides ample scope for development of legal instruments to protect the rights of the disabled people. Some of the major Constitutional Provisions facilitating supportive provisions on Disability in India are delineated in the following para.

The Constitution of India, through its Preamble, inter-alia seeks to secure to all its citizens; Justice, social, economic and political; Liberty of thought, expression, belief, faith and worship; Equality of status and of opportunity. Dignity of the individual is a fundamental notion behind all the fundamental rights guaranteed under part III of the Constitution of India. Part-III of the Constitution provides for a set of six Fundamental Rights to all the citizens (and in a few cases to non-citizens also). These include – Right to Equality; Right to Freedom; Right against Exploitation; Right to Freedom of Religion; Cultural and Educational Rights and Right to Constitutional Remedies. All these rights are also available to the Persons with Disabilities (PwDs) even though no specific mention of such persons appears in this Part of the Constitution.

Article 41 of Constitution of India declares that the State shall, within the limits of its economic capacity and development, make effective provision for securing the right to work, to education and to public assistance in cases of unemployment, old age, sickness and disablement and in other cases of undeserved want.

Article 46 lays down an obligation on the State to promote with special care the educational and economic interests of the weaker sections of the people, and protect them from social injustice and all forms of exploitation.

Article 249 of the Constitution empowers the Parliament to legislate on any subject falling in any list in order to fulfill its international obligations.

Legal Provisions on Disability in India

- The Mental Health Act, 1987
- The Rehabilitation Council of India Act, 1992
- Person with Disabilities (Equal Opportunities, Protection of Rights and Full Participation) Act, 1995
- The National Trust for the Welfare of Persons with Autism, Cerebral Palsy, Mental Retardation and Multiple Disabilities Act, 1999
- Rights of Persons with Disabilities (RPWD) Act, 2016

Disabilities covered under the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (RPWD) Act, 2016

1. Blindness	2. Muscular Dystrophy
3. Low-vision	4. Leprosy Cured persons
5. Hearing Impairment (deaf and hard of hearing)	6. Locomotor Disability
7. Dwarfism	8. Intellectual Disability
9. Mental Illness	10. Autism Spectrum Disorder
11. Cerebral Palsy	12. Chronic Neurological conditions
13. Specific Learning Disabilities	14. Multiple Sclerosis
15. Speech and Language disability	16. Thalassemia
17. Hemophilia	18. Sickle Cell disease
19. Multiple Disabilities including deaf-blindness	20. Acid Attack victims
21. Parkinson's disease	

NEED OF THE STUDY:

This study is necessary to understand the position of persons with disability (Divyangjan) in Latur district. This research will be focused mainly on socio-economic developments of Divyangjan by having support from different state and national schemes. There is a huge gap in the development of Divyangjan living in rural areas compared to urban areas. The access to different developmental opportunities to the rural Divyangjan is difficult as compared to the urban. Bridging this gap is very important to get participation of all Divyangjans in the process of national development. In this research the researcher will study different schemes available for socio-economic development of the Divyangjan. A direct survey will also be conducted to know the actual position and get suggestions for development among Divyangjan and the persons and organizations working in this field.

This study will be conducted in the Latur district which is situated in the south eastern part of Marathwada region of Maharashtra state. The district gets average rainfall in the monsoon season. The entire district is situated on the *Balaghat* Plateau. This district consists of 10 Tehsils/Panchayat Sammittes, 1 Municipal Corporation, 4 Municipal Councils, 787 Gram Panchayats and 945 Revenue Villages. Area of the Latur district is 7,157 Sq. Km. Most of the people depend on agriculture, sugar factories, dairy farms and other small industries. It had been well known for its food grain trade and oil mills. Latur is one of the educationally advanced districts of the state. Recently it is being known for its education pattern. Latur pattern has emerged as a gold standard for secondary and higher secondary education in the Marathwada region.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY:

1) To know the outcomes of different socio-economic developmental schemes announced by the state and Union Government for differently abled citizens
2) To check the usefulness of such schemes on the basis of outcomes
3) To know the actual situation of Divyangjan after enjoying different developmental schemes
4) To check the implementation plan and the actual penetration of the developmental schemes
5) To compare the social development of Divyangjan as a result of different economic support schemes

HYPOTHESIS OF THE STUDY:

1) The social status of Divyangjan has not been uplifted even though adopting so many economic support schemes.
2) State and Union Government have passed different schemes to uplift the status of Divyangjan but the actual implication failed.
3) Divyangjan forms large group of population which can be promoted for contribution in any form to the national development, but this was totally ignored by the implementing agencies.
4) Effective planning and implementation of socio-economic developmental plans for the Divyangjan, would gain the momentum of big contribution in national development.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY:

Survey research method is adopted for this research problem. This type of research problem is primarily directed to evaluate the performance of different schemes and services offered to the Divyangjan. Data is collected by making investigation and observation of the facts related to the research problem from the Rural and Urban Divyangjan. The objective of this type of research is to assess the impact of any such established research problem and suggest evaluative measures to find out solutions to overcome or mitigate the problem.

The questionnaire will be designed to collect the required data from different parts of the district. It will be designed to know the problems and suggestions on the research problem. The views of Divyangjan, Persons and Organizations working in this field will be acquired through this survey. The respondents will be selected on a random sampling basis. Separate analysis will be done for rural and urban areas. District headquarters and Tehsil places are considered as urban areas and Villages are considered as rural areas.

DATA COLLECTION:

- **Primary Data:** Questionnaire will be designed separately for getting feedback. Responses will be collected partially by personal visit and partially by phone call interview. Responses will constitute Divyangjan, Organisations and Individuals working in this field.

- **Secondary Data:** Secondary data from Referred interviews and articles published in Newspapers, Books, Journals and conferences in the field of socio-economic empowerment of Divyangjan will be collected. Ph.D. thesis will also be considered for looking into the previous study. Different internet sites and reports from government agencies will also be considered to access latest information related to said topic.

- **Sample Design:** Samples will be selected on random basis from rural and urban areas. District headquarters and all taluka places will be considered as urban areas and remaining parts as a rural area. 400 respondents from Divyangjan on a random sampling basis will be selected from rural and urban. This research will also consider Organizations and Individuals working in this field.

- **Statistical Application:** Questionnaire will be prepared in multiple choice formats so that it will be easy for analysis and interpretation. Percentage method and different types of tastes like T-Test, F-Test and Chi-square Test will be applied to analysis and interpretation. Data will be presented in graphical format with the help of Ms-Excel.

SCOPE OF THE STUDY:

- **Geographical scope:** The geographical scope of the study will be nation in general and Latur district of Maharashtra state in particular which includes 10 Talukas they are as: Latur, Ausa, Nilanga, Udgir, Ahmedpur, Renapur, Chakur, Shirur Anantpal, Jalkot and Deoni.
- **Operational Scope:** This research will consider socio-economic empowerment of the Divyangjan by considering different schemes and initiatives taken by the state and national government. The role of NGOs working in this field will also be considered.
- **Periodical Scope:** For this study purpose secondary data is collected from 2019 to 2023.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY:

Analysis and interpretation of the human beings perception is not an easy task and accurate analysis is next to impossible. So certain mental and psychological aspects/thoughts will be considered which are important for this research. Different mental and psychological barriers are there among Divyangjan which needs to be addressed. By considering all these limitations research work will be conducted.

POSSIBLE CONTRIBUTION OF THE STUDY:

Perceptions and actual condition of Divyangjan in socio-economic development will be known. The role of different schemes of state and national government and NGOs will be highlighted in the path of development of Divyangajn. The concrete and eternal theory can't be drawn with the results drawn from this research but awareness in this field can spread among individuals, organizations and society at large.

In spite of such an inexact nature of the area of study, analysis and interpretation of perceptions, evaluative conclusions and suggestions will contribute to the great extent in any field with human beings. Following are some of the probable major contributions of the study;

- ➢ Policy makers and administrators will visualize the outcomes from the schemes and initiatives which may result in improvement in their vision in this regard.
- ➢ Critical evaluation of different aspects of Divyangjan may lead to introspection and desired reforms in the field.
- ➢ Updating various schemes and initiatives through timely perceptions of ineffectiveness or less effectiveness of the existing regulations and policies will be possible.

CHAPTER SCHEME:

1) Introduction: This chapter will constitute with the historical background, present status and various schemes and initiatives taken by the state and central government for Divyangjan.

2) Research methodology: This chapter will cover Need of the study, data collection, objectives, hypothesis, research design and tools of analysis etc.

3) Review of Literature: Thoughts presented by scholars in India and abroad are presented in this chapter.

4) Review on Rights of Persons with Disabilities (RPWD) Act, 2016: This chapter will be the review of RPWD Act, 2016.

5) Review on National Sample Survey on Disabilities (NSS): In this chapter statistical analysis will be done by considering data presented in National Sample Survey on Disabilities.

6) Analysis & Interpretation of Data: Description, analysis and interpretation of socio-economic empowerment through various schemes of state and central government initiated for Divyangjan's empowerment.

7) Conclusion & suggestions: This chapter includes Testing of hypotheses, Final conclusions drawn and suggestions for the reforms in Divyangjan's Socio-economic empowerment.

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